

Likewise, on August 09, 2008, we sighted a single individual of Little Grebe with white upper parts and crown in the Gamela pond of Bankoda village in district Dungarpur, Rajasthan. The bird was prominent among the other grebes in the area.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* (Pallas, 1764) is a small, tailless, aquatic resident bird found all over the Indian subcontinent Ali and Ripley (2001). In normal individuals, the upper parts are dark brown with darker crown and sides of head, neck, and throat chestnut.



Fig. 2: Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* with leucism

8. STATUS OF WHITE-HEADED OR AUSTRALIAN STILT *HIMANTOPUS LEUCOCEPHALUS* IN SRI LANKA

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The White-headed Stilt (= Australian Stilt) *Himantopus leucocephalus* was first recorded from Sri Lanka by the second author on November 18, 1995 (De Silva 1996, 2000a). Since then there have been more records of the species from Sri Lanka (Table 1). All sightings are from the south-eastern quarter of Sri Lanka during the winter migratory season (i.e., approximately between mid-November and mid-April).

In general, the birds are solitary while in Sri Lanka, but there are a few reports of the White-headed Stilt being seen in the company of its congeners the nominate Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* - a common species in many Sri Lankan wetlands. On December 07, 2003, some

Black-winged Stilts were observed attacking and chasing a pair of White-headed Stilts (W. Kulasuriya pers. comm.). White-headed Stilts can easily be differentiated in the field from the Black-winged Stilts by their white heads and elongated black hindneck feathers, which form a sharply defined raised hindneck patch or ridge (De Silva 2002). A few Black-winged Stilts may occasionally have a dark hindneck but, even so, they can easily be separated from the White-headed Stilts, as their hindneck feathers are not elongated (i.e., they are of the same length as the other neck feathers), the dark hindneck patch is not sharply defined and the head is often suffused with grey (De Silva 2000b, 2002).

Table 1: Sightings of White-headed Stilt *Himantopus leucocephalus* from Sri Lanka

Date	Location	Observers/(Comments)
November 18, 1995	Bundala National Park	R.I. De Silva.
December 16, 1995	Bundala N.P.	P.T.G. Perera and R.I. De Silva.
January 07, 1996	Bundala N.P.	D. Perera and R.I. De Silva. (4 birds).
April 11, 1997	Bundala N.P.	A. Kirtisinghe and R.I. De Silva.
January 21, 1999	Palatupana	Dr. H.I.E. Katugaha.
December 05-08, 2003	Bundala N.P.	Prof. S.W. Kotagama, C.D. Kaluthota, Ms. Y. Karunaratne, N. Jayawardane, R. Amarasekera, I. Kaggoda Arachchi, and U. Wickremasinghe.
December 07, 2003	Bundala N.P.	W. Kulasuriya and U. Wijesena. (2 birds).
April 06, 2005	Bundala N.P.	Prof. S.W. Kotagama, M.G. Bellio, C.D. Kaluthota and S. Gamage.
November 12-15, 2005	Bundala N.P.	Prof. S.W. Kotagama, W. Kulasuriya, U. Wijesena, D.R.S. Illangakoon, D. Jayatilleke, M.S. Anver, S.M.N. Bulathwela, Ms. T. De Silva, N. Anurudda and J. De Silva.
March 04, 2007	Bundala N.P.	B.C.G. de Zylva.
March 21, 2007	Bundala N.P.	C.D. Kaluthota, K. Dayananda, H. Sathischandra and D.R. Vidanapathirana.
March 24, 2007	Bundala N.P.	R. Perera. (Photographic evidence provided).

This raises an interesting question: Do White-headed Stilts breed with the Black-winged Stilts, and if so, does cross-breeding occur in Sri Lanka? While positive evidence for this is lacking, some tantalizing clues suggest that they could do so. In 2001, a national newspaper published the photograph of a stilt in Ruhuna National Park (south-east Sri Lanka) with features of both the White-headed and Black-winged Stilt (photographic evidence provided). Authorities, who examined the photograph, suggest that the bird is probably a hybrid of the White-headed and Black-winged Stilt (De Silva 2003). There are a few other sightings of similar birds from the south-eastern quarter during the winter migratory season. While the possibility of interbreeding between the two species is suggested by these observations, the question is where such possible hybridization could occur. As White-headed Stilts and the (putative) hybrids are recorded in Sri Lanka mainly during the winter migratory season, it is unlikely that interbreeding would occur in the Island. Any possible hybridization would therefore conceivably take place where the home-ranges of the two species overlap during the breeding season. This suggests the Indonesian region, where the White-headed and Black-winged stilts occur together for much of the year.

It is significant to note that (as in Sri Lanka) White-headed Stilts visit India during the winter migratory season (Lopez and Mundkur 1997; Kotagama 2005). Since the majority of records of White-headed Stilts are from the eastern regions of India and the south-eastern quarter of Sri Lanka, it suggests strongly that the birds probably arrive in both countries from home-ranges which are farther East; once again suggesting the Indonesian

region. White-headed Stilts appear to be expanding their range in the Oriental region. As indicated above, the first author (SWK) has photographed White-headed Stilts in Sri Lanka and has shown that the species was known from India for many years (Kotagama 2005). (The Natural History Museum in Tring, has a specimen labelled "from British India" dating back to the 19th century). In addition to Sri Lanka, the species has been recorded from India (Lopez and Mundkur 1997; Kotagama 2005), South-east Asia (Nial Moores pers. comm.), Indonesia (Hayman *et al.* 1987) and Japan (Akira Hibi pers. comm.). Some authorities (Tony Prater, C.S. Roselaar, and Ray Pierce pers. comm.; De Silva 2000b) suggest that the White-headed Stilts visiting Sri Lanka could come from Sumatra or Java.

It is now clear that the White-headed Stilt is an irregular winter visitor to Sri Lanka in small numbers (Kotagama *et al.* 2006). We further suspect that the birds visiting India and Sri Lanka may be a part of a post-breeding dispersal.

The occurrence of White-headed Stilts in Sri Lanka and the possibility of hybridization with the nominate are interesting phenomena which merit further observation and study.

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9. REDESCRIPTION OF JAPANESE CATALUFA *PRISTIGENYS NIPHONIA* (CUVIER & VALENCIENNES, 1829): A NEW DISTRIBUTIONAL RECORD FROM SOUTH INDIAN WATERS

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Pristigenys nipponia (C & V 1829) - Smith 1966

Myripristis refulgens Val. 1862 : 1169 (Seychelles)

Priacanthus refulgens Sauvage, 1891 Hist. Nat. Madag.

Poiss 16: 129, Pl 5, fig 5 (E. coast Madagascar)

Pristigenys macrophthalmus (Agassiz, 1835)

Priacanthus nipponia Cuv. & Val., 1829 Hist. Nat. Poiss.